

MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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Mr. Ellsberg

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For comment.

Adam Yarmolinsky

My fellow Americans . . .

I. Just four years and ____ days ago, your President stood before you to report a critical threat to world peace -- one which required concerted action by all Americans. On that occasion, the danger lay across the Atlantic Ocean, in Berlin.

Tonight, your President appears before you on a similar mission -- to report an equally critical danger from far across the Pacific, in the Republic of Vietnam.

Four years ago, President Kennedy said:

"The immediate threat to free men is in West Berlin. But that isolated outpost is not an isolated problem. The threat is world-wide. Our effort must be equally wide and strong, and not be obsessed by any single, manufactured crisis. We face a challenge in Berlin, but there is also a challenge in Southeast Asia, where the borders are less guarded, the enemy harder to find, and the dangers of Communism less apparent . . ."

It is that other challenge about which I must speak to you tonight.

The challenge is not new. For eleven years, under three Presidents, we Americans have been concerned with threats to the peace

and security of all nations arising from the aggressive actions of the Communist Government of North Vietnam.

Americans are concerned because we have not forgotten the lessons of two World Wars -- two terrible tragedies which showed us what happens when aggression is allowed to succeed. We know that an aggressor's appetite only grows bigger with every success. We have seen the consequences of trying to appease such appetites by retreat.

We have also seen the consequences of standing firm. Wherever we have stood firm, it has been the aggressor who retreated, and peace has been secured.

Four years ago, we stood firm in Berlin, and the threat of war receded.

Two years ago, we stood firm in Cuba, and the missiles disappeared.

This year, we are confronted by still another critical challenge -- and once again we must, and will, stand firm.

Within the past few months, guerrilla terrorists in the Republic of South Vietnam have greatly intensified their efforts. It is now obvious that they hope finally to overpower the people and government of that besieged nation with a campaign of unprecedented violence and terrorism in the weeks and months immediately ahead.

Without help -- even more help than their friends are presently providing -- the people of South Vietnam might not survive this ferocious onslaught. Three Presidents of the United States -- President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President -- have promised that the United States will do whatever is necessary to assure that the people of Vietnam shall not become the victims -- and they would be only the first of many victims -- of such violence and terrorism.

We have kept that promise, and we will continue to keep it. In fulfillment of that commitment, and in face of the present situation, I have today instructed the Secretary of Defense and our military leaders to:

[INSERT PARAGRAPH ON ACTIONS PRESIDENT IS NOW TAKING TO INCREASE U.S. FORCES IN VIETNAM IN RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF SEC/DEF AND JCS.]

- A. Let there be no doubt about the threat these actions are designed to meet or the nature of the struggle being waged in Vietnam. This is not civil strife or rebellion. It is a war directed, controlled, and supported from outside the country by a Government bent on total conquest.

B. What is being attempted in Vietnam is the same cynical totalitarian aggression we've fought for a generation. Only now it is trying out a new strategy. It is now trying to prove that a small group of well-armed and ruthless terrorists can be sent into a country to first subvert its government and then to enslave its people before the world realizes that a war has even begun.

1. The fighting in Vietnam is brutal and widespread, and it has grown worse from year to year and from month to month. Does this mean that those responsible, the Viet Cong, are now so strong, so great in numbers, that they have become a great popular movement among the people of South Vietnam? The facts say otherwise.

These Viet Cong amount to less than 200,000 people in a country of nearly 15 million. After more than five years of extortion and terrorism, they have brought under their control only some 20% of the population -- and those only in areas of impassable terrain, where their government cannot protect them.

The Viet Cong forces have some 100,000 irregulars and about 75,000 regulars -- and at least 40,000 of those regulars -- more than half -- were infiltrated from North Vietnam.

2. What are they fighting for? Whom do they represent? No government regime, not one leader, not one political party in South Vietnam has ever endorsed them or sought their aid. Buddhists and Catholics, ~~generals and civilians~~ -- whatever their differences among themselves -- all reject the Viet Cong and what they stand for. From

those areas where the Viet Cong succeeded in gaining control, some 350,000 refugees have voted with their feet -- fleeing to Government-controlled areas at the first opportunity. There are no refugees going the other way.

3. The Viet Cong talk about building a rich and peaceful Vietnam -- about laying the foundations for a new life of freedom and happiness. But they practice the opposite.

They have practiced no construction -- only destruction. They have promised much, but they have delivered only terror, murder, kidnapping, and destruction.

Railroads and highways, factories and agricultural stations, hospitals and medical clinics, men and women fighting malaria -- everything the people in Vietnam need in greater abundance -- these have been principal targets of Viet Cong sabotage and destruction. Schools are among their favorites, and the Viet Cong has succeeded -- through harassment, assassination, and sabotage -- in closing or destroying hundreds of schools and preventing the education of thousands of children.

These "liberators" have sought to destroy, by murder and kidnapping, any one working to improve the lot of the Vietnamese people, whether in Government, education, agriculture, or medicine. Last year

alone, the Viet Cong killed outright 436 South Vietnamese hamlet chiefs and other Government officials and kidnapped another 1,131. Viet Cong bombings and sabotage killed more than 1,350 non-Government civilians, and kidnapped at least 8,400 others.

Their purpose is plain: to deprive the South Vietnamese people of every leader trying to carry through programs of social and economic betterment, to weaken their society, and to halt progress until the nation finally surrenders in despair to the Viet Cong.

4. The guerrilla leaders who carry out this aggression flow into South Vietnam from the North. The source of both their strategy and their support -- and their true master -- is the Communist Government in Hanoi.

In 1954, that same Government pledged to "respect the territory under the military control of the other party and engage in no hostile act against the other party."

In 1962, that same Government pledged that it would "not introduce into the kingdom of Laos foreign troops or military personnel." That same Government also pledged that it would "not use the territory of the kingdom of Laos for interference in the internal affairs of other countries."

That same Government of North Vietnam is now willfully and systematically violating those agreements of both 1954 and 1962.

It is engaged in aggression against the Republic of Vietnam where more than half of the Viet Cong regulars -- 40,000 of them -- have been infiltrated from the North.

It is engaged in aggression against the kingdom of Laos, through whose territory many of the infiltrators pass on their way to South Vietnam.

It has even struck out in acts of aggression against American ships on international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin.

I. B4b. The tools of terrorism -- the weapons, the ammunition, also come largely from North Vietnam. Large and increasing quantities of military supplies are being supplied to the Viet Cong from outside the country, with North Vietnam serving as a convenient channel for material that originates in Communist China and other Communist countries. Thousands of Communist Bloc weapons and hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition have been captured this year, in every area in South Vietnam.

I. B4c. The National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, which controls the Viet Cong, is itself a creation of Hanoi.

It was created at a meeting of North Vietnamese Communist leaders in Hanoi in September, 1960. And today it remains a subordinate unit of Hanoi's Central Office for South Vietnam, a major department of the Hanoi Government.

5. Yet, in the face of all this, there are some who would have us give in -- abandon the people of South Vietnam to so predictable a fate at the hands of such false revolutionaries. Some of those who so advise wish only to see an end to bloodshed, an end to terror.

But it was not we who started the fighting in South Vietnam -- and the bloodshed would not cease even if we were to withdraw tomorrow. The fighting in South Vietnam began long before we came to our friends' assistance. And it will continue so long as aggression continues in South Vietnam, with or without our participation. U.S. withdrawal would bring, not peace, but prolonged and increased battle, with more death and mounting chaos. For there is no doubt about the determination of the South Vietnamese to continue their resistance. More than 50,000 soldiers of South Vietnam have been killed or wounded in battle for their country since 1960. Last year alone, the small South Vietnamese Army suffered more casualties, in proportion to its size, than America incurred in the whole conflict of Korea. And still they fight on.

But the brave and sorely-afflicted people of Vietnam are not my only concern tonight. I am chiefly concerned -- as I am during every waking moment of my life, as every President must be concerned -- with what must be done to keep the world from stumbling, heedlessly and tragically, into another great war.

We have had two of those wars already in this century. We must not have another. In this era of ocean-spanning weapons and unlimited power for destruction, war is not only immoral, but futile and stupid. Tragically stupid. For in an ultimate test of strength, whatever the outcome, all of us would lose. And our children and grandchildren, down to the biblical seventh generation, would pay the price of our folly.

Yet peace cannot be secured by rewarding the deciples of war and the advocates of violence.

Peace will be secure only when the futility of force, the hopelessness of aggression has become clear to those who still seek to achieve their ends by aggressive means.

Peace requires that we make this lesson clear to the present aggressors in Vietnam.

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That remains our sole objective. We are increasing our effort, But we are not increasing our demands. Nor are we at war against change. Our sole aim is to give the people of South Vietnam freedom to evolve in their own way, independently, and not under the guns of imported terrorists.

A.

We are not fighting to gain colonial territory for the U.S. or to give us military bases.

Twice in this century, we have participated in major wars begun by others. And twice we have emerged as the most powerful military force among the combatants in those wars. And twice we came home without claiming a single foot of foreign soil as a reward for victory.

We have not changed. We have said that we will leave Vietnam when the aggression ceases in that country. Indeed, we are prepared to withdraw from South Vietnam at any time the Security Council of the United Nations so requests . . . and we will not exercise our veto to frustrate any such request.

B.


We are fighting to preserve the independence of a people, not to preserve any particular political group or particular Government in South Vietnam. Our presence in South Vietnam has been sought by every

head of Government since 1954. Although we believe that political stability in South Vietnam is a major condition for a final settlement, we have consistently shown our willingness to aid and assist the Vietnamese regardless of changes in the leadership in Saigon.

C. We are not opposing the unification of Vietnam, nor are we attempting to achieve unification by force. The Government of South Vietnam has proposed trade and customs unions and negotiations looking toward a confederation. We are fighting to prevent conquest here, and the example that the success of such conquest would set for others.

In this regard, it should be recalled that at the conference in Geneva in 1954, the delegation from the non-Communist portion of Vietnam refused to sign the agreement in protest against the partition at the 17th parallel, and proposed instead that the whole territory and population of Vietnam be placed under the control of the United Nations until free general elections were held. The United States delegation supported this action; the delegates of North Vietnam rejected the proposal.

D Our objective remains what it has always been: to prevent an outside government from overthrowing by force and violence the Government of South Vietnam. As I have said repeatedly, we shall take only those actions that are made necessary by the continuing aggression of




others. These aggressors serve no interest, not even their own. No one threatens their regime. We have no intent or desire to conquer them or to occupy their land. What we demand is simply that they carry out their past agreements, that they end their aggression against their neighbors.

The real goal of all Southeast Asia must be the peaceful progress of its people. And those people have the right to live side by side in peace and independence. If this right is denied to the people of Vietnam, then what will happen to the hundreds of other countries, whose strength is less than their will to independence? They have a right to build a new sense of community among themselves. They have a right to join, with help from others, in the full development of their own resources for their own benefit. They have a right to live together without fear of domination by anyone.

This is the right which the Communist Government in North Vietnam would deny. And the peace of the world will not be secure until they -- and all of like mind -- are finally convinced that this right cannot be violated.

But while we resist aggression in Southeast Asia, we must not lose sight of our commitments elsewhere. As President Kennedy reminded us on that night four years ago, the threat is world-wide.



Therefore, as we deploy additional forces in Vietnam, and as we consume larger stores of equipment and supplies, we must take care to replace them in our central reserve here at home. Accordingly, I have taken the following actions:

[DESCRIBE RESERVE CALL-UP, EXTENSION OF
TOURS, ETC.]

III.

As I have said, these new American forces in Vietnam must prove to friend and foe alike that the Viet Cong cannot achieve a military victory in the South. The increased forces will be strong enough to accomplish that objective, helping to break up major Viet Cong concentration in South Vietnam.

In recent months, the Viet Cong attacks have been in greater strength, the fighting has intensified, and battles have continued for longer periods of time. The tactical advantage which the guerrilla enjoys in this type of warfare means that although the regular Vietnamese forces outnumber the Viet Cong by 4 or 5 to 1, they are simply not strong enough to adequately protect all of their population in the face of this sudden, massive, brutal effort.

Only when a substantial portion of the population has become secure from guerrilla terrorism and extortion, can the loyal Vietnamese forces effectively overcome the strength build-up by years of mounting infiltration of weapons and terrorists.

Our air and naval efforts have been effective and we shall continue to carry out air and sea operations. They must be supplemented, however, by direct action on the ground in South Vietnam.

And, lest there be any lingering doubt in the minds of either friend or enemy, let me say still again that as we increase our forces, we do not change our objective. We are not trying to conquer North Vietnam nor to defeat socialism, communism, or any other ideology by military means. We are demonstrating that political ideologies cannot be imposed by military means -- including the type of means being attempted in Southeast Asia. We are demonstrating to Hanoi -- and to Peking as well -- that there will be no painless Communist conquest of Southeast Asia. It is vital that this message reach the Communists, loud and clear. For as long as they dream of success by their methods, the attack on South Vietnam will continue. And if they were to succeed in Vietnam, no small, emergent nation on earth could look forward to any other fate.

A great philosopher has said that those who cannot learn from history are condemned to repeat it. Until 30 years ago, violent events were occurring in such far-off lands as Ethiopia and Manchuria. To many Americans -- and to others as well -- these small countries were strange and of little interest.

Yet what happened in those far-off nations -- what we allowed to happen through our own indifference -- soon brought a whole generation of Americans on to the battlefields of Europe and into South Pacific jungles.

We won that war -- but we paid a terrible price in the lives of our nation's soldiers and our national treasure. Now we are living through an era which will decide whether we have learned the lesson of history, or whether history shall repeat itself.

That is the real issue in Vietnam.

I believe that we have learned.

I believe that if we remain resolute, the forces of freedom will ultimately triumph over all the would-be oppressors.

I believe that we will some day hand on to our children and our grandchildren a better world and a stronger peace than was ever given us.